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City-County Building
414 Grant Street
Pittsburgh
Allegheny County
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-5193

P H O T O G R A P H S

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

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CITY-COUNTY BUILDING
414 GRANT STREET
PITTSBURGH, ALLEGHENY COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

Jointly owned by the City of Pittsburgh and the County of Allegheny, the City-County Building is and has been since it was opened in December, 1917, occupied by both City and County government offices and courts. It is the fourth City Hall occupied by Pittsburgh's municipal government since the City was incorporated in 1816, one hundred years to the day, March 18, before the laying of joint cornerstones for both the City and the County in 1916. Starkly Neo-Classical in its massing, but relieved by Beau-Arts detailing, the block-long building is fairly representative of the work of its designer, Henry Hornbostel (1867-1961), a nationally-reknowned architect whose New York firm designed many local Pittsburgh edifices and memorials.

A bond issue authorized in the fall of 1910 raised what was to become the City's half (\$1,500,000.00) of the estimated cost of construction; by 1911 a city commission was formed by unanimous resolution of Council, joined in 1913 by county members pursuant to an Act by the State Legislature. The joint commission employed Cass Gilbert, the famous New York architect, to arrange a competition for the design of a municipal building. The winning design was submitted by Palmer, Hornbostel & Jones of New York, who were represented locally by Edward B. Lee; the plans were officially adopted January 19, 1914. Work began the following year, the first shovelful of earth on the one-block-square building site where fifty structures had been razed, being turned over in the morning of July 5, 1915. Two and one-half years later in December, 1917, Mayor Joseph G. Armstrong moved into his mahogany-panelled suite even though his furniture, designed by the architect, had not yet been delivered. Altogether, more than 30 separate contracts had been let, not including furniture, totalling just over \$2,771,000.00 or 7 1/2% under the budget.

The design architect Henry Hornbostel, had at the time of the competition for the City-County Building, recently come to Pittsburgh, his design having won the competition for the projected Carnegie Institute of Technology (now Carnegie-Mellon University), in 1902. He subsequently became professor of Architecture in the College of Fine Arts at Carnegie Tech, while maintaining his practice in New York. He spent the remainder of his professional career in Pittsburgh, retiring in 1939. Although many local landmarks bear Hornbostel's stamp (Soldiers & Sailors Memorial Hall, The University Club, the original modern University of Pittsburgh buildings, Grant Building, Montefiore Hospital, and more), he may be best known for his works elsewhere: the Warren G. Harding Memorial, the New York State Educational Building at Albany, and New York's Queensborough Bridge. He assisted in planning Northwestern University, and helped plan Hell Gate, Manhattan and the Pelham Parkway Bridges in New York.

The contracting engineer for construction of the 55,000 square foot building was James L. Stewart; steel fabrication and erection was performed by the McClintic-Marshall Company of Pittsburgh. The tiled vaults of the loggia ceilings (drawings for which, dated 1916, are on file at Columbia

CITY-COUNTY BUILDING

University) were executed by R. Guastavino of New York. Little is known of the remainder of the contractors and artisans who labored on the building.

There does remain, however, much graphic information, restored through modern technology into a permanent record on reproducible plastic film. The building stands today virtually unchanged except for minor interior partition re-arrangements. Original entry doors have been replaced; the Ross Street entrance has been made accessible to the handicapped; seven of the twelve public elevators have been modernized, but the original cast steel sculptured lobby elevator doors have been retained. By and large, the original plans and details are still valid and are referred to almost daily by the Department of Lands and Buildings of the City, in whose files they are kept.

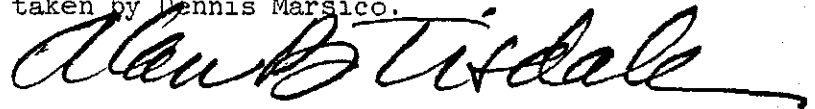
The granite-faced, steel framed City-County Building is rectangular in plan, measuring over 183 feet along Grant Street and Ross Street, nearly 300 feet on Forbes Avenue and Fourth Avenue. Running through the center of the building on its longitudinal axis, from the main entrance loggia at Grant Street on the West, to the "rear" entrance loggia at Ross Street on the East, is a grand gallery lined with fluted bronze columns supporting a barrel-vaulted ceiling 47 feet above the marble floor. Floor plans of the upper levels reveal four double-loaded corridors surrounding a light court. Generally, offices occupy the first five of the building's nine floors, while the uppermost floors are devoted to courtroom use and judge's chambers. The Mayor, the Mayor's offices, Council offices and Council Chambers take up fully half of the entire fifth floor, the chamber room itself comprising the larger portion of the front section on that floor, and extending two stories in height. The Council Chamber ceiling is a historical record. It carries the names of all the municipalities which have been annexed in making up the present City, the names of the mayors, and other data. Walnut wainscoting in the chamber and mahogany panelling in the Mayor's suite are typical of treatment given to courtrooms and offices of Department heads. Public corridors on all floors above the first have marble floors, plaster walls and ceilings, and white carrara glass wainscoting.

As other downtown Pittsburgh buildings, the City-County Building is heated by steam from a remote boiler plant. Ventilation is provided naturally through the many large windows punctuating the otherwise severe exterior; some areas have been centrally air conditioned, and in most offices, window air conditioning units have been installed. Some of the last vestiges of the building's original remaining equipment will soon be removed as a municipal cable television studio takes over a ninth floor space housing what once was the nerve center of the City's abandoned fire alarm system. The basketball court-sized room, once the devices used to receive electrical signals are removed, will, with relatively minor changes, be adapted for "state-of-the-art" use, making a powerful statement about the foresight of the original designer.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

No primary sources were available at the time this information was compiled, to the best of our knowledge. Secondary sources that were examined consisted of one book (Landmark Architecture of Allegheny County Pennsylvania, by James D. Van Trump and Arthur P. Ziegler, Jr., published by Pittsburgh History and Landmarks Foundation in 1967) and various newspaper clippings compiled by the Pennsylvania Division of the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh. The newspaper references are as follows (all are local papers, many no longer publishing): "E. B. Lee the Winner", The Builder, v.31 no. 9, January, 1914; "New City Hall Work to Start", Dispatch, June 13, 1915; "Cornerstone for City-County Building Laid, . . ." Leader, March 18, 1916; "Erection . . . Delayed by . . . Disputes", Post, March 19, 1916; "Furniture Ordered", Dispatch, July 22, 1917; "Director . . . Receives Bids . . .", Gazette Times, November 9, 1917; "New Rooms Provided for City's Executive to Be Open Tomorrow", Post, December 2, 1917; "Councilmen's Portraits May Adorn Chambers", Post-Gazette, December 3, 1927; "Minute Biographies: Henry Hornbostel", Post-Gazette, June 2, 1933; "Pitt Architect Hornbostel Is Dead at 94", Post-Gazette, December 15, 1961.

Architectural drawings for this article were prepared by the A. H. Mathias Company of Pittsburgh from Mylar intermediates which had previously been enlarged and restored by Bruning Division, A-M Corporation, from original photostatic reductions. Original prints of photographs of the Mayor's Office and of the Grant Street Elevation, both ca. 1918 are from a set of period publicity photographic prints on file in the City's Department of Lands and Buildings, and were prepared for this article by the A. H. Mathias Company. Current photographs were taken by Dennis Marsico.



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